

SOAR

Student Outcomes Assessment Review

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Dodge City Community College

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Team reassesses assessment at Rapid City conference

In the shadow of Mount Rushmore, some members of the Student Assessment Committee took the opportunity to review and compare the College's assessment efforts with those of other two-year institutions at the 1998 Summer Assessment Academy held at Rapid City, SD, July 25-28.

Faculty, staff, and administrators from Dodge City joined others from across the nation at the assessment conference sponsored by The Council of North Central Two Year Colleges.

Summing up the group from the College, Jeannette Kline, Education professor, said, "Before attending the conference, one of my frustrations was that I didn't feel I had a grasp of the *big picture*. I think I came back with a better understanding of what North Central is looking for and how we can achieve it. The good news is that I think our latest effort is on the right track."

Others from the College joining Kline in Rapid City included Dr. Larry Corpus, Biology professor; Jane Perkins, Nursing professor; Clark Killion, English professor; Greg White, Speech professor; Kay Hanzlick,

Administrative Assistant; Dr. John Thomson, Associate Dean of Instruction; and John Husband, Dean of Instruction.

Conference keynote speaker Dr. Cecilia Lopez, Associate Director, North Central Association, reinforced what Dr. Eliot Elfner told us at our spring assessment seminar, "Assessment is the documentation of achieved skills, not grades, not seat time, not credits. This documentation is achieved through competency based outcomes from the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains."

Even though educators dislike the business metaphor, Lopez told the group, "Competency based education equals knowledge for the work force. We must be able to assess the learners' knowledge, skills, and attitudes."

Session topics included Perspectives on Assessment at a Large Community College, Occupational Curriculum Assessment at a Small Rural Community College, Triage: Assessment and the Role of Research, The Practical Approach to Assessment, and break out sessions allowing the attendees the opportunity to discuss individual assessment issues with the assessment consultants.

Spring assessment seminar strengthens and validates assessment plan efforts

During the 1998 Spring term, the Student Assessment Committee brought assessment expert Dr. Eliot Elfner to campus to review the faculty's efforts at compiling a new Student Assessment Plan following the North Central Visiting Team's rejection of the 1997 plan. Results of the visit provided the College with new insight and direction to continue the Plan's revision.

Comments from Elfner's report follow:

- "Effort in developing an assessment process to pass the North Central muster is a sincere one based on the broad interest of the faculty. The faculty in general is actively interested in the process of developing and implementing your assessment process.

- "The proposed process is a comprehensive one. It addresses both institution-wide general education student learning outcomes and program specific learning outcomes.

- "I suggest that the committee give consideration to developing an assessment plan for the list of 7 Gen Ed outcomes separately, and rely on each program to assess only its own unique student outcomes.

- "Some of the plans tended to state intended student outcomes and means of assessment in process terms rather than outcome terms. . . such statements. . . should reflect what it is students who achieve program objectives can know, feel, or do.

- Each program must have an "Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose. . . the ESIP

is a general statement of institutional mission and purpose that derives from that institutional mission. The latter may be helpful if stated in general student outcome terms.

- "Course completion and individual grades do not lend themselves to judging the level of program success [and should not be used as measures of student assessment].

- "The pre/post-test approach may be appropriate for some intended outcomes, but when the outcome doesn't require that effort, it may be more efficient to gather evidence at only the post-test point in time.

- "I was pleased to see several adjunct faculty attended the meetings and would encourage a wider invitation to your adjunct staff to participate in this process.

- "I am certain that Dodge City Community College is well on its way to developing and implementing a successful assessment process. We concluded that until you have some initial baseline assessment information in hand, you should be very cautious about making any major changes in your programs. And when you do make the initial changes suggested by the baseline assessment information, they should be incremental in their implementation so that you can monitor the effect of those changes with subsequent assessment information. As you gain more confidence in the validity of your findings you can be more aggressive in proposing improvements in your programs."

Summer assessment team prepares revision reports

During the summer months, a team of Student Assessment Committee members have reviewed the existing Plan and have prepared reports for consideration to be taken up by the entire committee at its first meeting August 19th.

Team members included Dr. Larry Corpus, Dr. Judy Cagle, and Clark Killion, who

reviewed the General Education plan; Jane Perkins and Jeff Cole, who reviewed the Technical Programs; and Jeannette Kline and Greg White, who reviewed the Academic Transfer programs.

These reports and the insights gained at the Rapid City conference will serve as the focal points for final Plan revisions.

Conference offers Tips and Keys for Assessment Success

1. Faculty dedicated to the concept of assessment. Student outcomes assessment is the future and not a passing fad.
2. An enthusiastic Chief Academic Officer, who actively works at implementing the assessment plan rather than just giving lip service and token acknowledgement of assessment.
3. Institutional budget resources and research staff.
4. Use the data that is collected to improve learning at the institution.
5. Realize that constant change is something we should be looking at; update and revise as needed.
6. Realize that no one is buying the argument any longer that students are less qualified today than they were in previous years. Every generation thinks that.
7. Assessment must involve full-time and adjunct instructors alike.
8. Appoint a standing Assessment Committee.
9. Train the faculty in good practices related to assessment.
10. Demonstrate that your students have knowledge for the jobs of the future.
11. Implement a system wide approach to data collection.
12. Publish results and emphasize success stories to the students, the College, and the community.

— Dr. Cecilia Lopez
Associate Director NCA

Assessment Cycle

